

river Guardian

The newsletter of the River Colne Project

River Project—The future

We are now coming to the end of our second phase as support from the National Lottery through the Heritage Lottery Fund and Kirklees Council's Environment Unit runs out this spring. In phase two the River Project has carried out a huge variety of tasks and all have been well supported and have involved a large number of local adults and children.



River Colne, behind Titanic Mill, Linthwaite

Wildflower mini-meadows have sprouted on the new flood defence bank at Upper Mills, Slaithwaite, and in the Project Office gardens. The Friends of Slaithwaite Spa group has been formed and won funding to improve footpaths, fencing, walling and wildlife habitats in this green space overlooking the river. Local schools and members of the community have enjoyed workshops, looking at the river for inspiration and ideas to help develop a River Colne Sculpture Trail. The recording of historic iron field gates in the valley by volunteers has been a huge success with over 200 gates surveyed and a report published. Mick has improved footpaths, bashed Balsam (Himalayan), rounded up rubbish and nailed up nest boxes. With the help of volunteers he has also danced with dragonflies, mingled with moths and walked with wrens on a few of the River Project's public events.

This is by no means the end of the River Project. We have put together a programme of projects to develop through phase three and have applied for funding to continue our success for two more years. We have decided to make use of the practical habitat management skills of Mick by focusing on improving the riverside environment for wildlife and people. Projects in phase three will include: (i) improving the quality of the river and riverbank habitats, (ii) developing habitat management programmes for river corridor sites, (iii) improving footpath routes linking the river to the main communities and (iv) improving other green sites open to the public. As well as these projects we will continue to run a range of exciting public events, liaise and support other community groups and further raise the profile and care of the river Colne.



Removing Rhododendron to encourage the spread of a patch of heather in Linthwaite.

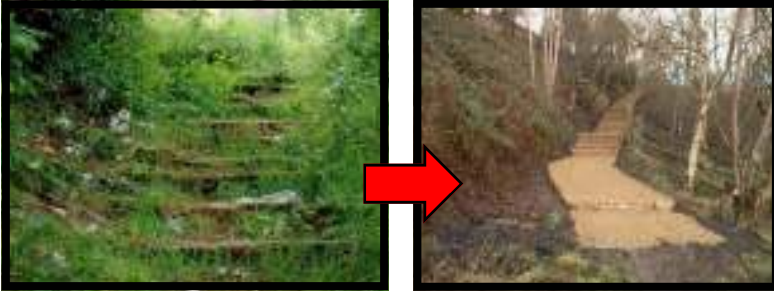
The River Project depends on volunteers with a range of skills to get much of the work done, we are always happy to take on new volunteers and if you are interested in getting involved by volunteering, contact Mick on the details on the back page.

Spring Events Programme

We are running some exciting family events in the Colne Valley and we wish to invite you along to join in the fun. The events will run from February to June and will be held roughly on a monthly basis. They will focus on having fun, but at the same time they will be educational and give you an opportunity to see the projects we have been working on. The events are still being developed and finalised but they may include talks from guest speakers, an evening Bat talk and walk, a family orienteering event or a stream and woodland ecology workshop. Look out for further information in our new notice board by our office, and a handy leaflet that will be published soon.

Mick's Report- How the p

Improving footpath access



Above: dangerous unappealing steps have been transformed into a clear access point to the river from Manchester rd.

We have improved footpath access to and along the river in a number of locations in the Colne Valley. An improved footpath network has meant that more people can enjoy the river. We are carrying out major footpath improvements to two sites in association with Environmental Alliance through the New Opportunity Fund 'Transforming Your Spaces' initiative. The two projects are to create a short circular route accessible to disabled users around Titanic Mill and along the river.

The second project is to upgrade the large flight of narrow steep steps from Manchester Rd. down to the river by Upper Mills, Slaithwaite. We have already treated the invasive Japanese Knotweed by Titanic. The works will begin in Spring. Work on the steps will start in the Summer.



We have carried out a number of smaller footpath improvements ourselves. The footpath from Manchester Rd. by the Olive Branch Restaurant, has been improved, the above photos show the improvement works to footpaths through Slaithwaite Spa and we are negotiating the works required on a number of other public footpaths at the moment.

Left: Long term volunteer, Edd Cowley, getting his hands dirty, clearing a well used path. Encroaching grass has made it very muddy and narrow so we spent a morning scraping it off to the hard surface.



Riverside improvement projects

The aim of the project is to work with landowners and businesses to improve their waterside environment for everyone.

Friends of Slaithwaite Spa

The River Project is continuing to assist and develop the group and we have already achieved a great deal at the site between Linthwaite and Slaithwaite. We have carried out a number of work days with local volunteers and have also employed a local contractor to restore the footpaths and install a safety fence along the steep drop down to the river. A number of further projects are planned, including woodland and meadow management and a training day in dry stone walling. We have received financial support and our thanks go to BTCV People's Place's Award, Kirklees Rights of Way Department, Community Spirit and the Colne Valley Area Committee for their support.

Milnsbridge Enhancement Group

During phase one of the River Project we worked with the MEG to re-install a section of dry stone wall in Milnsbridge. During very high water levels in 2003 some of the footings of the wall began being washed away. Myself, Bob Eades of Environmental Alliance and a number of volunteers from MEG spent a Saturday morning in August 2004 installing a cement stone wall, along the ground in front of the wall, to act as a buffer to future high water levels. Hopefully the new bit of wet wall will stop the earth underneath the dry stone wall from being washed away further. The wall had started to lean, so this work was very important to make sure the hard work put in a couple of years ago wasn't damaged.



Projects have progressed

Surveying historic iron field gates

SEE THE BACK PAGE TO
FIND OUT HOW TO GET
INVOLVED IN THE RIVER

All of our projects have been a success, but I am particularly happy with the way this project has developed. The surveying of iron gates may not sound like the most interesting of weekend activities but the response to this project has been brilliant.

Working closely with West Yorkshire Archaeological Services we held a training day in September to explain the project, show volunteers how to accurately fill in the survey sheets and for them to choose an area to survey. A 750 metre radius around the river was decided as the area to focus on and the area was then split into twenty five parts. Nineteen people took part in the survey.

Over two hundred local gates of interest were surveyed and their locations recorded. All the information has been passed onto WYAS to produce a report that will show some interesting things. There are a number of different styles of gates and it will be interesting to see if certain styles are particular to specific areas. An interpretive feature showing the results of the survey is to be installed by our office's in the spring.



Sculpture Trail River Wish

The project has focussed on community consultation to develop initial themes and ideas for a Sculpture Trail in the Colne Valley, mainly inspired and in places physically related to the river. The project has involved an outreach programme of workshops that aimed to inspire and enthuse local school children and members of the community to develop ideas, and with the help of local artists make a variety of art pieces.

Cate Clark and Zoe Carratt ran the workshops with pupils at Crow Lane Junior, Infant and Nursery School, Linthwaite Clough Junior and Early Years School, Wellhouse Junior and Infant School and Marsden Junior School. In addition there have been two community workshops, one of which focused to attract young people to the day. These workshops resulted in the creation of some marvellous sculptures that we hope will influence the creation of commissioned art works on the River Wish Trail.

We are in the process of applying for funding to the Arts Council to employ a project officer on the ground to develop the project and make sure the hard work of children in this consultation phase is used appropriately and successfully.



Above left: stunning art work of a mill along the river
Left: wonderful colourful art piece using a range of materials
Right: creative juices are in full flow at the first community event

The River Forum

COME ALONG AND TEST THE WATER!

The River Project is currently organising its sixth public River Forum. The meetings are open to everyone interested in the river and gives you the chance to learn about the River Project, voice any questions or concerns you may have and also bring any project ideas to the attention of the group.

Mick will be giving a presentation on how projects are progressing and what is being developed for the future.

Star billing will be given to Brian Lavelle, the Water for Wildlife Officer for the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust. He will be talking about the wildlife you might be lucky enough to see on our rivers in Yorkshire: mammals, birds, fish and crustaceans!

Nibbles and refreshments will be provided as always and displays from various local groups will be on show.

**River Forum – Thursday 3rd March, 7:30pm.
Civic Hall main hall, New Street, Slaithwaite.**

We hope to see you there!

Interesting insect Facts of the Day

- Around 80% of the food we eat comes from crops that have been pollinated by bees
- Butterflies can not fly if their body temperature is less than 86 degrees

Invertebrate Joke of the Day

What goes, "99-thump, 99-thump, 99-thump"?
.....A centipede with a wooden leg.

Dates for your Diary

- **River Forum**
Thursday 3rd March 7:30pm
- **Friends of Slaithwaite Spa- Dry stone walling training day**
Saturday April 2nd, 10am-3:30pm
Booking essential
- **Merrydale mammal and bird training day**
Three days, dates to be arranged

Have you seen this amphibian? - Great Crested Newt

Why not join us in an ambitious project by looking out for Britain's largest newt, the Great Crested Newt. Although now afforded some legal protection in the UK, populations have declined over recent years as a result of the destruction and fragmentation of their habitat. You may find them in your garden pond or spot one in a public pond while walking your dog. Great Crested Newts are very dark, nearly black in coloration and larger than a common newt. If you see something that looks like this, please do not touch it, as you may likely cause it harm. If you are lucky enough to find this fascinating species in your garden or on a walk, then contact us and we will carry out a survey of the pond. By helping us, you will be contributing to a larger scale survey that we hope to conduct in April. So keep your eyes peeled and we look forward to hearing about your sightings.



If you are interested in helping out with any of the projects ring Mick or pop in and see him.

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